*Title III, Canon 14.2 (g). Whenever the House of Bishops shall put forth a Pastoral Letter, it shall be the duty of each Member of the Clergy in charge of a Congregation to read it to the Congregation on some occasion of public worship on a Lord's Day, or to cause copies of the same to be distributed to the members of the Congregation, not later than thirty days after the receipt of the same.*

# PASTORAL LETTER
# HOUSE OF BISHOPS, WASHINGTON, DC
# SEPTEMBER 1990

"Evangelism is the presentation of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, in such ways that persons may be led to believe in him as Savior and follow him as Lord in the fellowship of the Church." (William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, Lambeth Conference, Louisville General Convention)

The meeting of the House of Bishops on the eve of the Decade of Evangelism has taken place in the city of Washington. In these surroundings we have become aware of the relationships within and the forces without through which God is continuing to transform us into an evangelizing body. We have heard from one another our various stories of spiritual journey. We have engaged one another in our common faith and our strongly felt differences. We have renewed our ordination vows in the completed National Cathedral. We have been challenged by leaders and thinkers from within and without our body. We have heard from leaders of Congress and have spoken to them.

In all this we have discerned the action of God in us which is the energizing power of an evangelizing Church. We call upon our dioceses, congregations, clergy and people to be open today to the transforming Lord in order that we be empowered for this Decade of Evangelism.

We believe that we will grow as an effective instrument of evangelism as we respond to the continuing challenge of our baptismal covenant, which calls us to "proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ."

All of us are called into a life of evangelism, to fulfill the command to "make disciples of all nations." The driving force in evangelism is the passionate belief that God wills transformation and resurrection for every person. Evangelism is not a method but a message; it is the recognition that salvation as reconciliation and healing is for all, and that reconciliation and healing are found in Jesus Christ.

What allows us to be bold and audacious enough to be an evangelizing Church? We believe that when Jesus died on Good Friday the old humanity was crucified with him; and when Christ was raised on Easter morning, God breathed new life into humanity. All creation participates in this mighty, cosmic healing. The Church is the community where that cosmic healing is consciously received through repentance and faith. The Spirit of God empowers us to proclaim this good news to everyone.

In the baptismal covenant we are called to "continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers."

A life of prayer in the Body of Christ is foundational in evangelism. This decade seeks to raise awareness rather than set a time for a task completed. It prepares us for evangelism in every decade. We call upon all members of this Church to devote themselves to prayer, study, fellowship, worship, witness and proclamation that God through us may heal this broken world.

The baptismal covenant calls us to "seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself."

Our proclamation is always in response to the self-offering of God. Such responding expresses the tenderness with which Jesus comforted and challenged his contemporaries with God's will for humanity.

Evangelism begins with listening. The root for the word "obedience" is: to hear...to listen! Jesus gives us the model in his own struggle to be present and listening to all whom he encountered. This listening will be primary whether sharing the Good News in our neighborhood or in worldwide mission. We commend to the Church the necessity of creating a prayerful environment for listening so that persons may be honored and welcomed, affirming diversity of expression and bonding to God in truth.

In the baptismal covenant we are called to "strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being."

During this time together, the Presiding Bishop has reminded us of our calling as baptized people to act for justice and peace, to re-open for our society the vision of a new life under the Creator, and to challenge decision makers in the community to center their leadership in moral principle. We ask the Church to accept Bishop Browning's challenge, as a necessary element in a vigorous and healthy evangelism. We believe that as events of justice and peace are illuminated by understanding how Christ is present, their value as proclamation is fulfilled.

As we enter this Decade of Evangelism, we realize that our worship, theology, social action and personal faith must be rooted in faithfulness to the Holy God and commitment to the Body of Christ. We believe that, in Jesus Christ, God calls all people of all cultures saying, "Follow me." So, with prayer in our hearts, the story of Jesus on our lips and our eyes focused on the world, we proclaim the risen Lord with celebration and thanksgiving.